

History of James Amasa Little

Written by granddaughter Abby Johnson Kendrick Robinson Gooch

James Amasa Little was born 14 September 1822 at Aurilius, Cayuga, New York to James Little and Susannah Young. He was named after his father but in later years he took the name of Amasa for a middle name. It seems he was born to sorrow and hardships, which began early in life. When but a small babe he was left fatherless by the death of his father. His father was killed in an accident. There is no record known of his early childhood days. When he was seven years old he was bound out to a couple by the name of Bouton who lived in Ira in Cayuga County. They were good Christians but they were married late in life and had no children to tone down their set and rigid ways. Sperry Bouton was a kindhearted man but he had a quick temper. His wife had a melancholy turn of mind and they were both apt to find fault with trifles and this was a cause of many severe beatings for the boy James. He often said that he could never recollect any affection ever manifested for him by either of them. As he grew up he longed for someone to love and someone to love him. There was a longing to live a more normal life. The fault finding and the beatings caused great discontent and he longed for a change to come. As he was nearing his 16th birthday a change came when one day Bouton flew into a rage and was about to give him another beating. James decided he had had enough and he told Bouton if he beat him it would be the last one and said he meant it. He had decided he had taken all he was going to take and who could blame him.

He was relieved now of much abuse but he took no advantage of it and continued to be diligent in his usual duties and labors. He lived with the Boutons until he was 17 years old and he then hired out on his own. The only schooling he had was four months in the winter until his 11th year when his education in schools was ended. He learned very rapidly and at an early age he resolved to play less and read more for the improving of his mind. He loved stories of travel, history, and biography and before he was 16 years old he had studied Grecian and Roman history. He was very interested in Plutarch's "Lives" and Milton's "Paradise Lost".

The Boutons were strict in the observance of the Sabbath day and attending church. In their neighborhood there was no profane or vulgar language, no sabbath breaking, and property was safe anywhere. These early habits had a great influence for good throughout his life and I well remember grandpa telling us girls that he was never allowed to laugh, play, or do anything except go to church and read the Bible from sundown on Saturday night to sundown on Sunday night. No wonder he knew the bible from A to Z. He was a marvel.

He taught school when he was 18 years old and had his first romance, which ended in disappointment because he was penniless and the girl had a small inheritance. He was most anxious to make a home of his own so in the spring of 1841, he visited his relatives in New York and then took a boat for Milwaukee. There he worked all summer for a long

headed praying Methodist who in the fall cheated him out of all his wages by taking out bankruptcy. Another great disappointment.

A year later he made his way to Nauvoo where his uncles and his mother were. He recalled that his mother had visited him once while he was at the Boutons and that she and her husband, Mr. Stillson, were Mormons. He was very prejudiced against the Mormons. He found his mother and Stillson in poverty and sickness and he himself contracted chills and fever. His stepfather, Stillson, was in the army at Jefferson Barracks at St. Louis, Missouri..

James was discouraged so he also enlisted in Company A 3rd Regiment of Infantry on the 23 November 1843. Although he felt reckless and indifferent as to his fate, he had no desire to make a wreck of his life. He believed that nothing could be gained by humiliating manhood. He had no sympathy with gambling and the other vices that are so common in military life. With the first rumors of war in the spring of 1844 his regiment was ordered south to Fort Jessop. Shortly after this he learned that his stepfather had died. In October of 1845 he was made "Army Postmaster" and from there on he remained at General Taylor's headquarters. He served in that capacity until the close of the war in the summer of 1848.

In the fall of 1848 he returned to St. Louis where he and his brother were in the grocery business. He had furnished the money for this enterprise while serving in the war with Mexico. He also found his mother there and she had married again to a Mr. Alonzo Pettingell who was a faithful Latter Day Saint. He was very desirous of teaching his stepsons the gospel but James was a confirmed skeptic and infidel as far as the Bible and religion were concerned, so his stepfather had questions as "Why am I here?" "How is it that I am a thinking active dual being of mind and body?" "I must pass away as others do so what is my future destiny?" He believed that there was a ruling power but as to its attributes or dwelling he had no conception of it.

One night as he lay in deep meditation he was greatly impressed to pray. He said, "Oh God, if there is a God, how can these questions be answered? Where can I obtain knowledge for myself?". Then a voice said distinctly, "Mormonism, Mormonism," He was not startled in the least but deeply impressed. Now he was more ready to listen to his stepfather who sincerely wished to enlighten him. Anyway, under the influence of his stepfather and with their discussions his concept of the Bible underwent a change and he saw things in a different light.

In February 1849, his stepfather became ill and they knew the end was approaching. James was much impressed by the calm resignation and the firm faith in all the principles that he had taught. This led James to further study and a desire to be baptized. The incident of his baptism is quoted from his own writings. "A feeling lurked within me to wish that my baptism be a little quiet. Elder Augustus Farnham was president of the St. Louis branch. He made arrangements for me to meet him at Cheaubeau's pond on the outskirts of the city about 9 o'clock Sunday morning. I quietly got a change of clothing from my room and with it under my arm I started for the pond. But I was to go through a curious and, to me, a novel experience. I had walked but a little distance when some

intelligence began to reason against my being baptized, bringing forcibly to my mind the unpopularity of the Mormons, the great sacrifice I was making and especially forced on me the idea that there would be no one at the pond to baptize me. This influence was so strong that in a few minutes I turned around to go home. I went back but a short distance and another power began to advance reasons why I should go to the pond to be baptized. So strong was this influence also that in a little time I turned around to go back to the pond. Again the opposite influence seemed to increase its efforts to induce me to return. It was so powerful I again turned back. After going a short distance a voice appeared to come from above me clear and distinct, "go thou down to the pond and thou shalt find someone there to baptize thee." With great resolution to obey I again started for the pond. The opposing influence seemed to redouble its efforts and I again turned to go home. There was no further opposition and I returned my clothing to my room and went to the saint's meeting. There I found Elder Farnham who informed me he had been to the pond and waited for me. I was afterwards baptized by Elder Farnham without any unusual occurrence and confirmed at the water's edge."

Soon after his baptism he had a great desire to gather with the saints in the mountains, and as if to drive him out the impression came that if he stayed he would die with cholera. His mother was also anxious to go so they obtained a wagon and yoke of oxen and of course some provisions and they prepared for the journey. Taking his mother and his half sister, Cornelia Stillson, they left St. Louis as soon as the grass began to grow. They traveled northward to Iowa to the crossroad from Nauvoo and arrived at Kanesville about the 1st of June 1849. Here they found plenty of people going west. They were organized in groups of ten, fifties and hundreds for the task of crossing the plains.

Their greatest difficulty was the stampedes of their cattle, sometimes when they were traveling but usually while encamped with the cattle in a corral formed by wagons. Stampedes were sudden, unexpected, and dangerous. They were so dangerous and frequent that they overbalanced the fear of Indians. Among the ten of James' group was John Lytle and family. A little romance developed between James and John's eldest daughter, Mary Jane.

They arrived near the mouth of Emigration Canyon on the evening of 16 October 1849. Next morning they discovered they were near civilization when they found their cattle in a stay pond. In their search for food the cattle had found a grain field. As soon as they arrived in Salt Lake City James found a one room adobe house for his mother and sister and he began to work for his uncle, Brigham Young.

On December 16, 1849, his mother prepared a nice dinner and asked her brother Brigham Young. That night James was married to Mary Jane Lytle. He then found a two room house so his mother and sister could have a room and he and Mary Jane the other room. Shortly after their marriage Indian trouble broke out near Provo. James, acting as Lieutenant under Lt. General Daniel Wells of the Nauvoo Legion was sent with 100 other men to quell the hostilities and make it safe for other future settlements. They suffered a lot with the deep snow and extreme cold weather that winter.

Previous to this time, a mountain of ore had been discovered by a southern exploring company. Late in the fall of 1850, George A. Smith left Salt Lake City with a party of 100 and traveled 250 miles south for the purpose of developing the iron industry. The town established in January 1851 was called Parowan. James and his wife were among the first to be called to settle there. Their first child was born 10 June 1851 and died the following September. Their second child was born in August 1852. They then moved to Cedar City, Utah where he acted as sheriff of Iron County.

In 1854 he was called on a mission to England so he moved his family back to Salt Lake. While on his mission he acted as associate editor of the Millennial Star, a church publication, and worked in the office of Franklin D. Richards who was president of the mission. Later when Orson Pratt was called to take President Richards' place, James was made a counselor to President Pratt. He spent 2 years and 8 months in the mission field and did considerable traveling throughout England and Scotland.

On 14 February 1857 he took a steamer for the return trip to Boston harbor but he was not yet free to go home to his family. He was appointed Frontier Emigration Agent for the church and served in this capacity until the following July. Only when he had seen the last of the companies, both ox team and handcart, outfitted and on their way across the plains could he return home.

The following year he and his family with all the citizens of Salt Lake City left their homes not knowing if they would ever return or if the U.S. Army would take possession and thus force a burning of their city. About 1862, a call came to settle St. George and in another 5 years to go to Eagle Valley, Nevada. Again in 1871 the family moved to Kanab.

In the meantime James had taken two more wives. On 18 December 1858 he married Hannah Matilda Baldwin (my grandmother) who had crossed the plains in the first Handcart Company two years before. Then on 19 November 1864 he married Mary Elizabeth Tullidge, a daughter of John Tullidge, from whom he had taken some singing lessons while in England.

In Kanab he was in the sheep business but on 20 October 1875 he left his sheep ranch and families and started for Salt Lake City on horseback to answer a call for another mission. This time he was called to the Eastern States. His special assignment was to get acquainted with the leading journalists and to do what he could to open up an influence in favor of the Mormon people. He spent much time in writing and seeking publication.

In April 1876 just 2 months after his return he was called to preside over the Northwestern States Mission which at that time comprised the states of Iowa, Nebraska, Dakota and Minnesota with headquarters at Council Bluffs. His absence from home naturally brought losses to his business and it meant real hardship for his families to be left again. Nevertheless, he felt it his duty to obey. Talk about sacrifice!

He faithfully performed his duties and returned to Salt Lake City on 5 August 1877. Then on the 9th of August President Brigham Young sent for him to come to his office and called him to do some writing for the church. On the 13th a desk was set up in President Young's office and James began his work on a compendium of the Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

On August 27 James called at the home of President Young who was ill. "There was a remarkable look of purity and innocence about him," James said. President Young died two days later on 29 August 1877. One of the greatest men of the age had passed away. James then went south to Kanab where some of the family still resided. He found them much in need of some of the necessities of life.

At the request of President John Taylor, he again went to Salt Lake City in October and continued the work on the compendium. Later, after showing his work to President Taylor, he asked permission to complete the work at home so he could be with his family.. President Taylor allowed to do this and the compendium was published in 1882. He is also the author of "From Kirkland to Salt Lake City", as well as biographies of many prominent men of the Church. At the time of his death he had a complete history of Brigham Young stored in his chest.

In 1890 when the Manifesto against plural marriage came out his wife, (H)Anna(h), my grandmother, and the two youngest boys, Malcom and David, had gone to Mexico. Her daughter Harriet had to stay and act as secretary to her father. The next summer Anna returned and took Harriet to Mexico, also.. After James finished a piece of literary work he had started he went to join Anna and the children in Mexico.

The information for this history was taken from the book "William Little Jr. and Allied Families" written by Harriet Little. We lived in Mexico when grandpa came to join Grandma. As little children we were happy to get to know grandpa as we had learned to love grandma. We loved having our aunts and uncles and other loved ones living near us. The account of their home and all is in the history of grandma so I will not repeat it. However, there are some things that grandpa told us that I have never forgotten.

As a little girl I can remember him telling me and my sister, Verna, one day when we were cutting up and talking and giggling as all young girls do, "Girls, girls, don't you know you have to answer for every idle word you say?" We didn't laugh where he could see us, but later we did, and thought how silly. But since I have grown older and studied the scriptures I know what he meant.

I remember he used to carry a small bottle in his pocket and we'd see him take it out and take a swallow once in awhile, so we asked him what it was. He said that it was a glycerin that he took to keep him from catching a cold and if he ever got a cold he'd take some cayenne pepper. I can never remember him ever being sick. He was very fussy about his meals being regular; breakfast at seven, dinner at 12 o'clock noon and supper at five. He always ate a very light supper and always practiced the saying, "Early to bed and early to rise." He was very refined and cultured. He never used slang and was very quiet.

On 13 December grandpa was ordained a Patriarch and when I was 13 years old he gave me my Patriarchal Blessing. I have always cherished that blessing. When I was about 17 or 18 years old I acted as his scribe and he gave many blessings. He really understood and loved the gospel and my first husband, Burrell Kendrick, was taught the gospel by grandpa before we were married. Burrell always loved and respected my Grandpa Little.

Grandma died in May of 1906 and after her death grandpa returned to Kanab and resided with Aunt Mary, his third wife, until he passed away on the 10 September 1908 at the age of 86. He is buried in Kanab. At that time I was 20 1/2 years old and I always have had a deep respect and deep love for him and the life he lived. His entire life was spent in the advancement of truth and service to the church.